

# WHEN WE BEAT MR. HARDING

By Frederick Upham Adams

I DO not know whether to be annoyed or amused over the result of my second golf engagement with Grace Harding, the charming daughter of the great railroad magnate. It was not in the least like my fond anticipations. Our first game was so romantic. It was as if the cloud-flecked and kindly skies had raised a dome over earth's most favored landscape and reserved its use for us. It was different to-day, but I take grim pleasure in recording the happenings in this diary of my golf season.

I presume it is necessary that beautiful maidens shall have fathers. I raise no doubt that Mr. Harding is a wonderful financier and railway genius. It is likely that he is entitled to a vacation and to that relaxation which comes from taking exercise, but all this does not justify him in—well, in "butting in" on our game. I do not use slang as a rule, but no other expression so accurately describes the conduct pursued by that man this afternoon. And as for Carter—well, I have no words to express what I think of Carter.



All He Asks of a New Ball Is One Crack at It

He persists in calling her "Kid," and takes not the slightest consideration of my feelings in the case.

As I have recorded, Harding drove a ball more than two hundred fifty yards the first time he ever had a club in his hands, and he has spent most of his time since in attempting to duplicate the performance. He will not do it this year or next, but he is making the most desperate efforts which have come under my observation. Kirkaldy, our club professional, is one of the best in the country, and charges five dollars an hour for private lessons. It is impossible to give Harding a strictly private lesson, for the reason that while he is at it you can hear him all over the links.

However, Harding paid him forty dollars a day—he says he believes in the eight-hour work-day—and stuck to it for a week. During that time he broke six drivers and used up more than "a peck of balls," to use his own expression. He has not driven one of them more than one hundred fifty yards, and his helpless rage is excelled only by the vehemence and originality of his expletives. He reminds me of an elephant trying to thread a needle by brute strength.

When we started from the club-house—Miss Harding and I, of course—her father was on the lawn not many yards away engaged in the interesting but expensive experiment of trying to drive balls across the lake. He buys boxes of balls, at five dollars a box, with the joyous abandon of a pampered boy purchasing fire-crackers on the Fourth of July. All he asks of a new ball is "one crack at it," and our caddies are becoming rich and insolent from the revenue derived by recovering the hundreds of balls Harding has driven into the lake or sliced into the adjacent woods. His golf is costing him almost a hundred dollars a day.

As luck would have it he turned and saw us as we were starting for the first tee. He was in his shirt sleeves, and his face was red from exertion and anger.

"Where are you going?" he called.

"We are going to play a round," I answered, with a sinking heart.

"Good! I'll go with you," he returned. "Chuck the rest of the balls into that sack," he said to one of the caddies, "and follow me."

What could I say except to declare the abominable falsehood that we should be delighted to have him join us. As we were waiting for him, who should come from the club-house but Carter.

"Hello there, Carter!" shouted Harding. "Come

on and play with us! We'll make it a foursome, or whatever you call it. What do you say?"

"Delighted! Delighted!" declared Carter. I happen to know that he had already made up a game with Marshall, Boyd and Chilvers, but he did not hesitate to throw them down for a chance to be with Miss Harding.

"We'll have a great game," asserted Harding, mopping his brow. "How'll we divide up? Of course, Carter, you are the best player, and I suppose Smith comes next, but I can beat the 'Kid' here," patting Miss Harding on the shoulder.

"I'll bet you cannot," I declared, angry that he should class Carter above me.

"Bet that I can't beat Grace?" he exclaimed. I told him that such was my opinion.

"Of course I can beat you, papa," laughed Miss Harding. "You can hardly play at all."

"Talk of the insolence and ingratitude of children!" he gasped. "'Kid,' I'm astonished at you! I'll teach both of you a lesson. What do you want to bet, Smith?"

I suggested that a box of balls would suit me as a bet.

"Box of monkeys!" exclaimed Harding. "I thought you were a sport, Smith. A box of balls doesn't last me as long as a cigarette does Carter. I wouldn't exert myself for one box of balls. Tell you what I'll do. We'll all keep score of our shots, and for every one I beat her you pay me a box of balls, and for every stroke she beats me I pay you a box of balls. How does that strike you?"

"Take him up, Mr. Smith," said Miss Harding, a smile on her lips and a meaning glance in her eyes. I would not have refused if I had known it would cost me every dollar I had in the world.

"You are on, Mr. Harding," I said.

"We'll teach you a good lesson, Papa Harding," she declared, with a confidence which surprised me. "You have never seen me play."

He roared with laughter.

"Talk about David and Goliath!" he exclaimed. "Tell you what I'll do, 'Kid.' I'll make you a little bet on the side. If you beat me I'll buy you that sixty-horse-power buzz-wagon you have been asking for, and if I win you buy me a new hat out of your pin money."

"It is a shame to take advantage of you, papa," she hesitated, "but I want that new machine awfully, and I accept your offer."

"Good! Good!" he declared. "Whose first shot is it?"

"Miss Harding and I shall be partners," suggested Carter, before I could get the words out of my mouth.

"Since I am interested in Miss Harding's play to the extent of a box of balls a stroke, I claim her as partner," I said, looking hard at Carter.

"Mr. Smith and I shall play as partners," said Miss Harding, and it was the happiest moment of my life.

"I don't care who are partners," said Harding, stepping up to the tee. "I'll shoot first, and you keep your eye on your Uncle Dudley."

He piled up a mound of sand, gripped his club like grim death, drew back, swung with all his might—and missed the ball by three inches.

"One!" laughed Miss Harding. "Don't press, papa!"

"I'll press all I please!" declared Harding. "One missed swipe cuts little figure with me. Keep your eye on this one!"

He hit it this time, and it went into the lake, which is out of bounds. Then he dropped a ball and drove it a few yards into the tall grass to the right.

"How many does that make?" he asked, taking out a large jack-knife.

"Three, papa, and you're playing four," said Miss Harding.

"Poor start, but I'll recover," he said, cutting three nicks in the shaft of his club. Then Carter drove a good one, and I teed up a ball for Miss Harding. The moment she took her stance and grasped her club I noted a difference in her style of play over the day on which we first played.

Her club-head came back with a fast, even curve,

and on the return she caught the ball squarely with a good though not perfect follow-through. The ball carried straight and true at least one hundred twenty-five yards, and rolled past the hundred-fifty-yard mark. It was a nice, clean drive.

"Good work, 'Kid!' I'm proud of you!" grinned Harding; but he did not seem the least dismayed. I should dislike to play poker with him for large stakes. I lined out a beauty, and then we found Harding's ball for him. It was well buried in tall, rank grass, and it took him four strokes to get it on the fair green. His ninth shot dropped in the brook, but he got a fair brassie and reached the green in fourteen. The row of notches on the shaft of his club looked formidable, and he conversed considerably with himself.

Miss Harding's reversal in form was marvelous. Two iron shots put her ball on the green; her approach was a little weak and she missed an easy two-foot put, but she made the hole in seven, which is only one over bogey for a woman. Carter and I both got fives.

Harding's putting was a revelation in how not to put a ball in a cup. He went back and forth over that cup like a shuttle. This performance added five to his score, and when he was through the total of his strokes was nineteen. He was fighting mad; but did not say a word.

He made a fair drive on the second hole, flubbed his second and third shots, but his fourth was a screaming brassie which landed him on the green within two inches of the cup. It was one of those freak shots that a man makes once in a season, but it made Harding the happiest man on the links.



Conversed Considerably With Himself

Miss Harding was playing like a veteran. The hole is three hundred yards, and she was well on the green on her third, and holed out in six. I was astounded. Her execution was not in the least like that of the day when we played alone, and I am at an utter loss to account for it. For the entire eighteen holes she played steady, consistent golf. It was not brilliant, but it was a splendid exhibition for a woman. She kept on the course and missed only two drives.

No language of mine can describe the game played by her father. I really felt sorry for him, and attempted to induce him to call our bet off, but he indignantly refused to listen to me. In addition to miserable playing he had worse luck. The nicks in his club were so numerous that they weakened it to such an extent that he finally broke it, also one of the commandments. A predatory cow swallowed his ball. He drove another one into the crotch of a tree, and later in the game hit a farmer, broke a window in the club-house, tore his trousers, sprained his thumb and poisoned his hands with ivy in searching for a lost ball.

The story of his calamities and of his undoing may be epitomized by his score, which was a terrible one, and footed up one-hundred one in the out-play and seventy-one in the in, a total of one-hundred seventy-two.

Miss Harding made it in one hundred sixteen, and I am sure that she could have done better had it been necessary. I played a rattling good game, making the round in eighty-one, which is the best score I have made this season. I put it all over Carter, who lost a side bet of the dinners for the four of us. Miss Harding won an automobile which will cost not less than fifteen thousand dollars. I won fifty-six dozen golf balls, sufficient to last me for two years.

Harding lost his temper; but I will give him credit for finding it again the moment the game was over. "You threw me down, 'Kid,'" he said to Miss Harding; "but I'll forgive you. You get the buzz-wagon, and Smith gets fifty-six dozen of those balls, but I'm going to learn how to hit one of those blamed things in the nose every time even if I have to resign the presidency of the R. G. & K. Railroad."

Miss Harding has promised to tell me sometime the secret of the marvelous improvement in her game.



He Hit a Farmer